



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 20 October 2021 at 5.00 pm.

County Borough Councillors - Council Members in attendance:-

Councillor S Powderhill (Chair)

Councillor S Trask	Councillor R Williams
Councillor G Hughes	Councillor M Powell
Councillor H Boggis	Councillor J Bonetto
Councillor S Bradwick	Councillor R Bevan
Councillor A Calvert	Councillor T Williams
Councillor A Crimmings	Councillor D Williams
Councillor G Davies	Councillor L De Vet
Councillor S Rees	Councillor J Elliott
Councillor S Evans	Councillor M Forey
Councillor M Norris	Councillor E Webster
Councillor M Webber	Councillor M Griffiths
Councillor A Roberts	Councillor M Weaver
Councillor L Walker	Councillor K Morgan
Councillor R Yeo	Councillor P Jarman
Councillor R Turner	Councillor G Thomas
Councillor A Morgan	Councillor M Adams
Councillor G Stacey	Councillor R Lewis
Councillor C Leyshon	Councillor J Brencher
Councillor D Owen-Jones	Councillor W Owen
Councillor S Morgans	Councillor S Belzak
Councillor W Lewis	Councillor G Jones
Councillor W Treeby	Councillor K Jones
Councillor L Jones	Councillor L Hooper
Councillor J Harries	Councillor D Grehan
Councillor E George	Councillor H Fychan
Councillor J Williams	Councillor A Davies-Jones
Councillor J Davies	Councillor J Cullwick
Councillor A Cox	Councillor A Chapman
Councillor E Griffiths	Councillor G Caple
Councillor J Edwards	Councillor J Barton

Officers in attendance

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr B Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services
Mr P Mee, Group Director Community & Children's Services
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources
Mr R Waters, Service Director – Frontline Services
Mr P Griffiths, Service Director Performance & Improvement

64 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors Sera Evans, A S Fox, M Fidler Jones, G Holmes, G Hopkins, P Howe, J James MS, W Jones, S M Powell, S Rees-Owen, J Rosser, E Stephens and M Tegg,

65 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, County Borough Councillor P Jarman declared the following personal interest in relation to the following agenda items:

Agenda item 6 - **COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS**

Agenda item 9 - **REVIEW OF REGULATION, AWARENESS AND ENFORCEMENT OF FLOOD AND WATER LEGISLATION**

"Dispensation to speak and vote on all matters for the duration and adoption of the 2021-22 Budget process in my capacity as Leader of the Opposition"

66 Announcements

Minute's Silence

The Leader led the Council in a Minute's silence in memory of MP Sir David Amess who had been tragically murdered recently and in memory of the 116 children and 28 adults who lost their lives in the Aberfan disaster 55 years ago.

Announcements

County Borough Councillor S A Bradwick wished to congratulate Sheppard's Chemist, Abercwmboi, Aberdare for being nominated for two Awards for 2021, the Independent Community Pharmacy Practice of the Year Award and the Excellence in Delivering Self-Care Agenda in Community Pharmacy Award. The Practice was nominated for these Awards due to the staff dedication and commitment during the pandemic and out of 500 nominations the Practice reached the final 3. The nominations are recognition of the staff's hard work and support for the communities during a very difficult time and Cllr Bradwick wished to thank the staff members Katherine Sweet, Katherine Whatberts, Anna Matthews and Councillor Tina Williams for continuing to do so. He requested that a letter of congratulations is sent to the Practice from the Mayor.

County Borough Councillor P Jarman wished to congratulate one of her resident's son, Flight Lieutenant Steve Jones who is currently serving in the Falklands Islands and has been awarded the Wally Marriot Royal Airforce Association Liaison award for his work with veterans during the Pandemic. The award recognises his work, commitment and dedication to supporting veterans. It was announced that Flight Lieutenant Steve Jones is a credit to the service and thoroughly deserved the award. Councillor Jarman also hoped the Mayor would send a letter of congratulations to Flight Lieutenant Steve Jones.

County Borough Councillor R Lewis announced that Hope Rescue in Llanharan has been recognised by the RSPCA's PawPrints Awards 2021, having achieved a Bronze Kennelling Award. PawPrints is run by the RSPCA to

recognise local authorities, housing associations, contingency planners and other public sector organisations that go above and beyond basic or statutory requirements to ensure higher welfare standards for animals in the services they provide. Winning a PawPrints Award this year of all years is a huge achievement.

67 Minutes

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 29th September 2021 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

68 Members' Questions

Members were advised that apologies of absence had been received from the Cabinet Member for Education & Inclusion Services, County Borough Councillor J Rosser, the Cabinet Member for Adult Services and the Welsh Language, County Borough Councillor G. Hopkins and the Chair of the Licensing Committee County Borough Councillor A S Fox and therefore written responses in respect of questions 4, 7, 8 and 10 would be circulated to all Members following the meeting.

Members were also asked to note that questions 5 and 18 would fall due to apologies offered on behalf of County Borough Councillors S M Powell and P Howe.

1. Question from County Borough Councillor R. Yeo to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan:

“Can the Council Leader make a statement on the plans to develop the North West Transport Corridor?”

Response from County Borough Councillor A. Morgan:

The Leader advised that the initial phase of work had been commissioned by Transport for Wales, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, Cardiff City Council and Welsh Government and produced a transport study on the North West Corridor which aims to improve travel connectivity between communities in RCT and north west Cardiff.

The Leader highlighted some of the specific plans which have been identified to improve walking, cycling and transport links along the Corridor by 2025 such as Increasing the number of services on the City Line to at least four trains an hour between Cardiff Central and Radyr with a new station at Ely Mill, improvements to the Treforest Industrial Estate train station and a strategic bus park and ride service at Junction 33 of the M4. These packages of measures represent a more equitable way of travel.

Supplementary question from County Borough Councillor R Yeo:

I welcome the Beddau Spur Transport project, what does the Leader think the broader scheme will bring with it?

Response from County Borough Councillor A. Morgan:

The Leader stated that it is a significant project which will bring with it many benefits for the local residents and those who commute along the A4119 which is heavily congested, and he hoped it would bring with it a package of measures that would help bring with it a sustainable alternative to the increasingly pressurised road network.

2. Question from County Borough Councillor E George to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan:

“Can the Leader of the Council outline what discussions are ongoing through the WLGA or directly through RCT in relation to next year’s Budget settlement?”

Response from County Borough Councillor A. Morgan:

The Leader advised that all 22 Council Leaders meet regularly with the Local Government and Finance Minister Rebecca Evans and the Leader had met with the Finance subgroup with Welsh Government recently. All discussions have been positive to date. He advised that next year Welsh Government will see a substantial increase in their budget partly from the increase in National Insurance however on the 27th October 2021 the comprehensive spending review will be announced.

The Leader added that for Local Government across Wales, between £47-50m of any additional funding received will go back to UK Government Treasury due to the National Insurance increase. There has been substantial extra in year investment this year from Welsh Government to support the pressures on social care and there is likely be further funding for social care going forward.

The Leader advised that although the in-year funding is substantial and welcome it is indicative of the pressures felt by this particular sector and will have less impact this year due to social care baseline costs. The Leader advised that lobbying of both UK and Welsh Government ahead of the 27th October will take place to ensure that the additional funding is passported to local government.

In conclusion, the Leader stated that there will be a 3year indicative settlement this year from Welsh Government which will help with forward planning.

Supplementary question from County Borough Councillor E George:

“What are the Leader’s priorities for next year?”

Response from County Borough Councillor A. Morgan:

The Leader advised that social care will be the biggest priority of the Council next year and will be the biggest winner in terms of any additional funding. Schools have always been protected even at a time when the Council had its budgets cut. Last year a substantial amount was used to bolster support services such as Public Health Services and additional funding into Youth Services previously. A draft Budget will be prepared to bring forward before Members and to consult with members of the public.

3. Question from County Borough Councillor L. M. Adams to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, County Borough Councillor M. A.

Norris:

“Will the Cabinet Member provide an update on the Council’s Free Town Centre Wi-Fi rollout?”

Response from County Borough Councillor M. Norris:

Councillor Norris confirmed that the scheme forms part of the Council’s wider support for the regeneration of town centres. It supports traders to operate digitally and helps increase their online presence to contact a larger customer base. It also provides additional incentives for residents to shop locally. The service has been fully accredited by the friendly Wi-Fi service, which is a government scheme which means a wide range of inappropriate web pages and content identified by the Internet Watch Foundation is blocked from appearing online when using the Council’s Wi-Fi service. This provides confidence to residents that the service can be enjoyed and used safely.

Councillor Norris advised that recently free Wi-Fi was rolled out to Tonypany town centre and by the end of the month it is anticipated that the last town centre, Pontypridd, will also be completed. The target completion date for Pontypridd has slipped slightly due to complexities of connecting the Council’s broadband service in Sardis House to the system, however, final testing of the signals is underway before the live launch.

In conclusion, Councillor Norris stated that the original pledge during the last Election was to pilot free Wi-Fi in 7 principal town centres and was one of 12 core pledges made and Pontypridd town centre will be the last one to be completed.

There was no supplementary question

4. Question from County Borough Councillor J. Bonetto to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan:

“Can the Council Leader provide an update on what discussions have been held with Transport for Wales on the South Wales Metro plans and how far advanced is the preparation works for the electrification of the Valleys lines?”

Response from County Borough Councillor A Morgan:

The Leader explained that in his role as Leader of the Council, of the WLGA, and as Lead Spokesperson for Transport in Wales he holds regular discussions with Transport for Wales. Progress in some areas, as with all industries, has been delayed due to covid, but the piling works in the Valleys for the overhead stanchions has commenced. He advised that although the rotary piling is quiet work, unfortunately, the majority of the work is hammer piles which can be more disruptive. Once work is completed in the Cynon Valley it will progress into the Rhondda Valley next year. Transport for Wales has indicated that the project has a 3–6-month delay but they are committed to the full electrification of the Valley line with new trains on order and the Depot work in Taffs Well underway.

Supplementary question from County Borough Councillor J Bonetto:

“Can the Leader provide information on the quality and some of the extra

features the new trains will have?

Response from County Borough Councillor A Morgan:

The Leader advised that he had recently had the opportunity to visit the new mock trains to see first-hand the improved quality and comfort and features such as WI-FI, phone chargers at every seat with three pinned plugs for laptops. There are also dedicated spaces for cycles for members of the public who want to use active travel and cycle to the train station.

The Leader explained that the new trains are quieter which will be of benefit to those residents who reside near the rail lines. Trains will operate later into the night, more frequently and offer a more efficient service on the weekends. He added that the new trains are faster, the service from Aberdare to Cardiff is approximately 14 minutes quicker than the existing service, likewise the service from Treherbert to Cardiff and the new trains will offer a more viable and attractive public service for commuters.

5. Question from County Borough Councillor G. P. Thomas to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan:

“Can the Council Leader provide an update on the Zip World attraction in terms of jobs created visitor numbers to the attraction so far and the potential economic boost to the County?”

The Leader commented that Zip World has been a success to date and visitor numbers are 49,656 (participants taking part on the zip lines or the coaster ride) with 14,897 (spectators) which equates to almost 65,000 visitors in total since it opened. In terms of employment, 150 employees in total have been employed through Zip World with 105 currently employed (the drop in numbers being attributed to seasonal work and entering into the winter season). The turnover to date is £2.5 million. In terms of the forecasting, the local spend is approximately £16 ¼ million across the region (with restrictions affecting visitor numbers) which includes caterers, accommodation such as Airbnb, bus/travel providers and further investments may develop as a result of Zip World.

The Leader wished to put on record his thanks to several officers of the Council who have helped to drive the project forward.

69 Council Work Programme 2021/22

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications presented an update regarding the adopted and published Council Work Programme for the 2021/22 Municipal Year advising that the Revised Local Development Plan (RLDP) 2020-2030 has been deferred to the Council meeting in January 2022. The Freedom of the Borough report would also be presented for Council's consideration next month. The Cwm Taf University Health Board will attend the November Council meeting to commence at 4pm to accommodate this item.

70 Council Tax Discounts

Through his report the Director of Finance & Digital Services provided Members with the opportunity to review the level of Council Tax discount for prescribed classes of dwellings within the County Borough and to review, amend or reaffirm the level prescribed.

Members were referred to section 4 of the report which outlined the requirements of the Council in respect of the Council Tax discount provision, with the Director advising that the Council has discretion to award up to 50% discount in respect of two prescribed classes of dwellings (usually described as second homes and holiday homes), i.e., Class A and Class B. Members were further advised that the Council had previously determined not to allow a discount in respect of Class A, B and C properties. In conclusion the Director advised that the Council proposes not to make any changes to its current arrangements.

The Leader advised that a review would be undertaken by the appropriate Scrutiny Committee in respect of the level of discount for prescribed classes of dwellings, namely long-term empty properties and second homes, which was welcomed.

In response to a query, the Director advised that since the removal of the empty property discount on the 1st April 2018 the number of long-term empty dwellings in RCT has fallen by 19%.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED:**

1. To agree the continuation of no Council Tax discount in respect of Class A, B and C properties.

71 Council's Draft Corporate Performance Report 2021/22

The Service Director Performance & Improvement presented Rhondda Cynon Taff's draft Corporate Performance Report (CPR) which contains progress for 2020/21 and plans for 2021/22 in respect of the Council's strategic priorities. It also sets out how the CPR satisfies the legal duty on the Council, as with all Councils in Wales, to publish objectives, take all reasonable steps to meet those objectives and produce an annual report.

The Service Director advised that the CPR is a balanced and evidence-based report and set in the context of the unprecedented challenges presented by the Covid 19 pandemic and ongoing recovery from Storm Dennis. He added that the information includes a range of sources, service information, external regulator reports and key regard has been given to the Council's year end performance report 2020/21 which was reported to Cabinet and scrutinised by the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee in July 2021.

The Service Director confirmed that Cabinet, at its meeting on the 18th October 2021, recommended the approval of the CPR by Council. Subject to Council's consideration the agreed action plans for the three priorities People, Place & Prosperity will form part of the Quarterly Performance Report which will be presented to Cabinet and scrutinised by the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee during the year. The Council's external regulators, Audit Wales, has a statutory duty to audit the CPR which will be formally reported to Council in due course.

The Political Group Leaders paid tribute to all staff, frontline staff, social care workers and partners such as Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board for their response during the covid 19 pandemic.

Following discussions, the Leader advised that the Council's scrutiny committees are continuing to scrutinise the Council's ongoing response to the pandemic and going forward he would likely, as Leader of the WLGA, be asked to provide evidence to a Welsh/UK enquiry into the Pandemic but stressed that it should not be about apportioning blame but more about lessons learned.

Where indicated, it was confirmed that information would be provided to the individual Members following the meeting. Further to other queries raised, the Chief Executive advised that a recent report regarding the Council's biodiversity projects had been presented to Cabinet to promote the sustainable management of natural resources, likewise a report is presented annually to Cabinet outlining the number and nature of complaints made in connection with the Local Authority which receives the second lowest number of complaints per head of population of all the local authorities across Wales.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the draft CPR (Appendix 1) as endorsed by Cabinet at its meeting on the 18th October 2021.

(Note: The Members present from the RCT Independent Group (County Borough Councillors M Powell, L Walker, K Jones, W Owen) and County Borough Councillor S Belzak wished to have it recorded that they voted not to approve RCT's draft CPR)

72 Responses to the Boundary Commission For Wales' Initial Proposals

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications presented his report which provided Council with the feedback following consideration by Members, on a cross party basis, through the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on the 12th October 2021, of the initial proposals of the Boundary Commission for Wales, in respect of the proposed new parliamentary constituencies in Wales as referred by Council.

The Service Director advised that subject to any additions or amendments, the letter containing the feedback will form the basis of the Council's formal response to the Boundary Commission for Wales.

Following consideration of the responses, it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the comments contained within the draft letter as the formal response of the local authority subject to the following comments being inserted:

"Members felt strongly that as Aberaman once formed part of the Aberdare Urban District Council, the historical relationship of Aberaman (North and South) lends itself to Aberdare rather than the proposals to combine these electoral wards from the neighbouring Cynon Valley constituency with Pontypridd".

73 Review of Regulation, Awareness and Enforcement of Flood and Water Legislation

The Director of Frontline Services presented his report which detailed the review of the regulation, awareness and enforcement of flood and water legislation within the Council following Storm Dennis. The report further advised of the implementation of an enhanced Flood Awareness and Enforcement team following agreement by Cabinet at its meeting on the 21st September 2021 and proposed increased regulation via the enactment of Land Drainage Byelaws under Section 66 of the Land Drainage Act 1991.

The Director referred Members to the recommendations of Cabinet in their entirety as set out at point 4.1.2 of the report and of the importance of the Member briefing that was held on the 28th September in respect of Flood Risk Management and Byelaws.

In conclusion, the Director explained how the ordinary watercourse byelaws have been designed as a model for local authorities to either use in their current format as a whole or to help develop their individual byelaws and will assist the Local Authority manage the increased risks of flooding.

Following discussion and responses to queries raised, Members **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the recommendations that were approved by Cabinet at its meeting held on the [21st September 2021](#) and as set out at 4.1.2 of the report;
2. Note that a Members' briefing session in respect of the proposed adoption of Model Byelaws under the Land Drainage Act 1991 was held on the 28th September 2021, to which all Members were invited; and
3. Authorise Officers to commence the process of formally adopting the Model Land Drainage Byelaws as attached at Appendix 1 to the report (and as recommended by Cabinet at its meeting on 21st September 2021) in accordance with the Local Government Byelaws (Wales) Act 2012.

74 Appointment of additional Lay Members onto the Governance & Audit Committee

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications presented his report to advise Council of the arrangements in respect of the appointment of Lay Members to the Governance & Audit Committee, in accordance with the relevant Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 provisions which come into force in May 2022.

The Service Director advised that with the introduction of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 further amendments now need to be taken forward in respect of the membership and role of the Governance and Audit Committee. He referred to the key points within his report.

Members were referred to section 5 of the report which set out the requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 with regards to membership and chair arrangements for the Governance & Audit Committee.

The Service Director proposed that the membership configuration of the Governance & Audit Committee is reviewed and reduced to 9 for the Municipal Year 2022-2023 with 6 Elected Members and 3 lay persons. He sought Council's consideration for extending the term of office for the existing Lay Member on the Governance & Audit Committee for a further period, until the next ordinary Local Government elections following May 2022.

Following consideration of the report it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the arrangements as set out in the report, relating to the appointment of new Lay Members to the Governance & Audit Committee for a term of office commencing from the beginning of the 2022-2023

Municipal Year until the next ordinary Local Government Elections;

2. To agree, that following the recruitment process detailed in the report, a further report be presented to Council in order to receive recommendations from the Appointments Committee in respect of the appointment of Lay Members to the Governance & Audit Committee; and
3. For the reasons set out in the report, agree an extension to the term of office of the current Lay Member appointed to the Governance & Audit Committee, Mr. Christopher Jones, until the ordinary Local Government Elections following May 2022 (currently scheduled for May 2027).

75 Hybrid Meetings- Review of Progress to Date

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications through his report, provided Members with details of the meetings undertaken during July – September through hybrid webcasting arrangements and updated Council in respect of future arrangements for implementation supported by the Democratic Services Committee.

The Service Director advised that following discussions at Council and following a review by the Democratic Services Committee of the progress of the hybrid meetings to date, it was the intention was to undertake a phased roll out of the hybrid approach with a series of mock demonstrations in advance of each meeting. This would ensure a steady timetable of meetings with consideration of the needs of each individual Committee.

In conclusion the Service Director referred Members to the timetable set out at 6.6 of the report which included the progression of a combination of scrutiny, regulatory and governance themed committees.

Following consideration of the report it was **RESOLVED** to note the further progress made with the phased roll out approach to hybrid meetings detailed within section 3 of the report.

76 Urgent Executive Decisions

In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules 17.2(a), the Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication presented an overview of the Urgent Decisions taken forward by the Cabinet Committee and Urgent Key Officer Delegated Decisions taken forward outside of the Cabinet Committee during the period June– September 2021

It was **RESOLVED** to note the information contained within the report.

77 Notice of Motion

The following Notice of Motion was received in the names of Councillors E. Webster, K. Morgan, Jarman, S. Evans, J. Williams, A. Cox, S. Rees Owen, M. Weaver, D. Grehan, E. Griffiths, H. Fychan, E. Stephens, L. Jones, G. Davies, A. Chapman, J. Davies, J. Cullwick:

That this Council urgently reconsiders its duty and implementation of its

enforcement powers in relation to making our streets safe and accessible and free from the hazards caused by parking infringements in our communities

There is growing evidence that the safety of children is being put at risk because of indiscriminate parking on highways and lanes adjacent to schools across the County.

There are growing tensions in our communities and frustrations that public bodies, like this Council and the police are not doing enough to protect our children from harm.

Such opinions are also being expressed in communities generally where incidents of dangerous and inconsiderate parking are causing tensions.

In order that such matters are urgently addressed this Council resolves

To refer this matter to the relevant scrutiny committee, requesting the establishment of a scrutiny working group as a matter of urgency which will identify a range of sustainable measures together with proposals for implementation to address the issue, including (but not exclusive):'

Undertaking a review of what can be done to improve the use of the Council's current powers including the use of approved fixed cameras in hotspot locations and increasing mobile patrols.

Examining the benefit of a public information exercise reminding motorists to always park responsibly.

To consider calling on Welsh Government to legislate for moving traffic offences identified by approved cameras as a positive addition to current enforcement powers vested in local Councils

Following discussion in respect of the motion and in accordance with the Council Rules of Procedure 12.7, it was **RESOLVED** not to adopt the notice of motion.

(**Note:** The following Members present, wished to have it recorded as voting in favour of the Notice of Motion:

Plaid Cymru Group - County Borough Councillors A Cox, J Cullwick, G R Davies, H Fychan, D Grehan, E Griffiths, P Jarman, L Jones, K Morgan, M Weaver, E Webster and J Williams.

Conservative Group – County Borough Councillors L Hooper and S Trask

RCT Independent Group – County Borough Councillors L Walker and K Jones

County Borough Councillor S Belzak).

This meeting closed at 7.10 pm

**Cllr S Powderhill
Chairman.**